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CHURCHES RAISE CALL FOR SOUTH AFRICA AID

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NEW YORK (DPS, June 16) -- "Material assistance is vital to ensure that basic survival needs are met during this crisis. Church workers are in the forefront of ministering to the homeless, the injured and the dying."

Those words are part of a Statement on the Need for Humanitarian Assistance for South Africa by the Hon. Leonard S. Coleman, commissioner, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, and chairman, executive committee, board of directors, the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, made at a press conference at the Episcopal Church Center here on June 12, and they are representative of the tone of the conference. Others present included Marion M. Dawson, the Fund's assistant director for migration affairs; the Rev. Charles A. Cesaretti, Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning's deputy for inter-Anglican affairs; Meredith Lloyd and the Rev. Leonard Freeman of Trinity Church, New York; Kenneth Mallard of the World Council of Churches; and Dan Connell, executive director of Grassroots International.

The conference had been planned prior to the announcement of the South African government's imposition of a state of emergency, which added a special poignancy to Coleman's quoting from Bishop Desmond Tutu's statement of the day before: "Given the track record of our government, it is likely that we are going to get the iron fist." Coleman added, in remarks not in his prepared statement, that he wished to call attention to the psychological violence to people living under oppression, noting that it is less easy to see than physical violence, yet it also claims lives.

Connell emphasized that channels to get aid through to South Africa do, in fact, exist. Like other speakers, he stressed the need for ongoing aid to the people of South Africa.

Lloyd read and Freeman expanded on a Statement on Coordinated Church Approach to South Africa, limning Trinity's two-pronged approach of divestment in companies doing business in South Africa combined with

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re-investment in church-led programs in key areas established by its Grants Program, such as leadership training, community development, family life education, micro industrial skills training and theological education. The statement also expressed Trinity's desire for joint action with other churches and organizations.

Reaction from the Presiding Bishop to the escalating situation in South Africa was outlined by Cesaretti. This includes telegrams of concern and support sent to Tutu and to the Most Rev. Philip R. Russell, Archbishop of Capetown and Primate of the Anglican Province of South Africa. Also, with the National Council of Churches, Browning has joined in the following actions: 1) a telegram to the President, Secretary of State and Congress, asking immediate action, including sanctions; 2) a telegram of support to the South African Council of Churches; 3) a mailgram to the Rev. Leon Sullivan, author of the Sullivan Principles, asking him to move up the time line for U.S. corporations' immediate action; 4) a mailgram to five U.S. banks which fund South Africa, requesting that they cease to do so; 5) in cooperation with other denominational heads, a mailgram to 12 U.S. corporations identified as unwilling to work with the Sullivan principles.

Cesaretti noted that "we can take all the political actions we like, but when the day is done...it is the leadership of the humanitarian efforts that has been effective." He also announced that the Archbishop of Canterbury has sent his special envoy, Terry Waite, to South Africa to report back on the situation there.

Mallard seemed to speak for all when he said simply, "They (the people of South Africa) need your prayers."

Among the projects in South Africa which have been supported by the Presiding Bishop's Fund this year are St. Bede's Theological College Pre-School (Umtata, Transkei): \$5,000 and Diocese of Natal, Philisiwe Clinic: \$3,000. In addition, the Fund collected and distributed the \$20,065 collected through the General Convention offering in support of Bishop Tutu. The Fund also provides direct assistance for displaced persons in South Africa as well as for persons seeking refuge outside South Africa.

Those wishing to participate in the Fund's work on behalf of South Africans can send checks made out to the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, marked "South African Appeal" to the Fund at 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017.